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## Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, 1987

*By the President of the United States of America*

### **A Proclamation**

Every year for more than three decades, we Americans have celebrated our constitutional rights and responsibilities as citizens of the United States through the observance of Citizenship Day and Constitution Week. In 1987 this traditional celebration takes on special significance, as September 17 marks the 200th anniversary of the signing of our Constitution.

In anticipation of this occasion, the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution will conduct a special observance on September 16, 1987, entitled "A Celebration of Citizenship." On this date, millions of students will reflect upon the blessings of liberty bestowed by our Constitution. Parents and adults can join them in paying tribute to the Framers of the Constitution and in gratefully recalling the privileges and duties secured by our Constitution. At 1:00 p.m., E.D.T., a national and international radio and television broadcast will unite all Americans in a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. The broadcast will include a reading of the Preamble to our Constitution. It is my hope that all Americans will take advantage of this opportunity to gain new insight into the precious principles of our governing document.

Those principles have stood the tests of time and turmoil. In 1787, we were a Nation of some four million people, living in 13 sovereign States, aligned along the eastern seaboard. The States were "united" in name only, barely held together by the Articles of Confederation, an agreement of mutual interest among the 13 original colonies drafted during the Revolutionary War. Once the common enemy was defeated, the general confederation began to unravel. Many of the States had their own army, printed their own currency, and charged tariffs to other States for using their ports and roads.

A convention was called in Philadelphia in May 1787 for the sole purpose of making the Articles of Confederation "adequate to the exigencies of Government and preservation of the Union." Many of the Nation's leaders feared that unless a stronger national government was created, the country would founder, leading to the formation of independent republics or the reaccession of foreign powers. Despite the long odds against success, the Framers were able, through numerous compromises, to fashion a blueprint for a new Nation. In this peaceful revolution, the States transformed their loose political alliance into a Federal union under the first written national Constitution in history. Today, 200 years later, that Constitution is the oldest written instrument of democratic rule in the world still in use, and it continues to proclaim and to shape a peaceful revolution toward freedom and prosperity for all mankind.

The Congress, by joint resolution of February 29, 1952 (36 U.S.C. 153), designated September 17 as "Citizenship Day" in commemoration of the signing of the Constitution and in recognition of all who, by coming of age or by naturalization, have attained the status of citizenship, and authorized the President to issue annually a proclamation calling upon officials of the government to display the flag on all government buildings on that day. Also, by joint resolution of August 2, 1956 (36 U.S.C. 159), the Congress designated the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23 of each year as "Constitution Week" in recognition of the historic importance of the Constitution and the significant role it plays in our lives today.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 17, 1987, as Citizenship Day and call upon appropriate government officials to display the flag of the United States on all government buildings. I urge Federal, State, and local officials, as well as leaders of civic, educational, and religious organizations, to conduct ceremonies and programs that day to commemorate the occasion.

Furthermore, I proclaim the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23, 1987, as Constitution Week, and I urge all Americans to observe that week with appropriate ceremonies and activities in their schools, churches, and other suitable places.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twelfth.

*Ronald Reagan*



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